

B-2904

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name The Senator Theatre

other names/site number

~~B-2904~~

2. Location

street & number 5904-5906 York Road

☐ not for publication

city, town Baltimore

☐ vicinity

state Maryland code 24

county Independent

code 510

zip code 21212

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

☒ private☐ public-local☐ public-State☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)☐ district☐ site☐ structure☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

0 buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

Date 7-18-89

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE/theater

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE/theater

COMMERCE/specialty store

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Art Deco

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

STUCCO

roof ASPHALT AND SLAG

other GLASS

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

The Senator Theatre, located in northern Baltimore, Maryland, is a 1939 Art Deco movie theater with a circular stucco and glass block lobby fronting a brick auditorium. It is further distinguished by a projecting semi-circular lighted marquee topped by a neon-traced, free-standing letter sign. Curving brick one-story wings flank the entrance facade. The entrance facade features black and marbleized Vitrolite, aluminum zig-zag decorative bands, and fluted aluminum moldings around the doors and the ticket office. The glass block of the upper lobby is arranged in stepped pyramids illuminated by colored neon backlights. The interior of the lobby contains mural paintings, geometric decorative trim and panels, and a terrazzo floor. The concession area beyond the lobby is partially paneled with wood veneer. Opening off the concession area are the men's and ladies' lounges and restrooms, the manager's office, and the staircase to the mezzanine promenade. The promenade is also paneled in wood veneer and has free-standing wood veneer columns. The projection room is entered off the promenade and is flanked by two private viewing rooms. The main auditorium is a large, open space without a balcony. Curtained walls converge toward the proscenium, which is embellished by molded composition panels in stylized floral designs. The walls bear light sconces in aluminum and glass geometric design. Light boxes at the ceiling create prismatic effects above the proscenium and along the sides of the central panel. The Senator Theatre retains most of its exterior details with little major alteration. The doorways have been enlarged and the aluminum moldings and those around the ticket office are replacements of the original trim. Some aluminum trim has been painted black. A brick cleaners shop was added to the north elevation in 1962. The interior of the theater has been altered primarily in terms of wall finishes in the auditorium and lounges. The former standing room area was enclosed to form the present concession area. The Senator Theatre's overall integrity of historic character remains high and the alterations are reversible or restorable.

8. Statement of Significance

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1939

Significant Dates

1939

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Zink, John J., Architect

Eyring, E. & Sons, Builder

Kubitz, Otto, Structural Engineer

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Senator Theatre is significant as the finest Art Deco movie theater still in use in Baltimore City and the most intact example in the city of this type of structure. It embodies the distinct characteristics of and architectural style which was not widely used for Baltimore buildings and it retains a high degree of integrity. Few Baltimore theaters of its era remain intact. Most have been destroyed or unsympathetically altered, leaving The Senator Theatre as the best example of its kind in the area. Built in 1939 as a suburban neighborhood movie house, The Senator Theatre later became a first run theater. Today it is one of only 11 local theaters or theater complexes still operating in Baltimore City. In continuous use since it was built, the theater has recently hosted local and world premieres of major motion pictures filmed in Baltimore. Architecturally, the building retains many significant exterior details including pigmented structural glass, glass block, neon signage, and decorative aluminum panels. The use of glass block on the rounded front facade is the most extensive use of this material as a decorative element in any Baltimore structure. The interior has seen little alteration and features a round lobby with terrazzo floor, wood veneer paneling (now covered), and murals. Other significant interior features include original carpeting adjacent to the upper level private viewing rooms, portions of original lighting in the auditorium, the upper level private viewing rooms, portions of original lighting in the auditorium, round columns, and decorative plaster panels. It was designed by a notable local architect, John J. Zink, and operated by Durkee Enterprises, one of the largest and oldest movie circuits in Baltimore.

☒ See continuation sheet 9/1

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Specify repository:

Thomas A. Kiefaber, owner

10. Geographical Data

Acres of property Less than one acre

USGS Quad: Baltimore East, Maryland

UTM References

A 18 361230 4358170

Zone Easting Northing

C

B

Zone Easting Northing

D

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 25 of Ward 27, Section 6465, Block 5093B on attached plat map.

☒ See continuation sheet 10/1

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the two city lots (25 and 26) combined in 1939 to form the present single lot upon which the resource stands.

☐ See continuation sheet

1. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet L. Davis and Fred B. Shoken

organization Baltimore Heritage, Inc. date April 26, 1989

street & number 24 West Saratoga Street telephone (301) 396-4866

city or town Baltimore state Maryland zip code 21201

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The Senator Theatre is a free-standing theater located on the west side of York Road just south of Belvedere Avenue in the Govans neighborhood of northern Baltimore (Photos 1-7). The site is an irregular polygon, roughly trapezoidal in shape, occupying less than an acre of land. The theater is placed on the lot generally on a skewed east-west axis, with its west wall partially coinciding with the west property line (Photo 6). The south side of the auditorium wall overlooks a below-grade area into which, the auditorium's emergency exits discharge (Photo 7). The north side contains the service entrance, another exit and boiler and compressor rooms with a chimney stack (Photo 4). In 1962, the one-story dry cleaners shop was attached to the north side (Photo 3). It adjoins the manager's office, closing off an original glass block window.

The theater has two floors, but these are not articulated on the exterior. The circular drum of the lobby extends the full height of the building. Four brick piers covered with cream-colored stucco buttress the lobby. The stucco of the piers was originally stained in tones graduating up from dark to light at the score lines in the stucco. The colors are as yet unknown because no color photos or descriptions have been located.

Panels of glass block, "Insulux" in two patterns (Nos. 2 and 17 by Owens-Illinois), are lighted from behind by red and green neon tubes. The original lighting was fluorescent, but was replaced with neon for longer life sometime after World War II. The glass blocks are arranged in a stepped pyramid in each panel, similar to a skyscraper, with the ribs alternated for further effect (Photo 3). The two front piers also have a vertical glass block strip on each exposed face. The tops of the piers have galvanized tin moldings in a stylization of a capital. These are currently painted olive green. The molding extends around the top of the lobby wall.

The auditorium wall behind the lobby is medium red common bond brick. The bulk of the auditorium is distinguished by vertical setbacks which correspond to the converging of the interior walls toward the screen wall at the west end (Photo 5). The only exterior ornamentation is a series of graduated bands of darker-toned brick, increasing in number from bottom to top which correspond with the scoring lines in the stucco of the piers. Adjoining the lobby and entrance facade on both the north and south are curving one-story brick wings. The exteriors are gold iron-spot brick and are embellished only by poster display cases on the south wing and east face of the north wing (Photo 1). The junction of the north wing and the 1962 cleaners shop is marked by a change in the brick color (slightly darker on the shop facade) and a drop in the shop's parapet line (Photo 3). The shop extends west about 38 feet, ending just east of the service entrance on the north elevation. Its width on the street elevation is about 43 feet.

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The main entrance facade is under the marquee, a semi-circle with horizontal neon at its sides and the theater's name in free-standing letters in a geometric style on its front edge (Photo 2). The letters are also highlighted in neon. The underside of the marquee has recessed lighting. The marquee originally had exposed light bulbs numbering about 750 on its soffit. The concrete sidewalk in front of the entrance contains sections inscribed with the names of several recent movies filmed in Baltimore which had their local premieres at The Senator Theatre. The facade itself has a central ticket office flanked by two sets of double plate glass doors. The outer edges of the facade are the bases of the upper lobby's piers covered in black Vitrolite with poster display cases framed in aluminum molding. Horizontal bands of zig-zag aluminum, Kawneer Design No. 753, correspond to narrower, plain aluminum bands on the curved main facade wall (Photo 8). (Kawneer, of Niles, Michigan, is still in business.) This wall is covered with Walnut Agate Vitrolite panels, a marbleized pattern of white and tan on black. A marble base of Cardiff green extends across the entire facade. The door frames are fluted aluminum, replacing the original "Extrudalite" frames. The plate glass doors are also replacements (Photo 10). The ticket office has a glass screen with curving side panels over a fluted aluminum base (Photo 9). The base was originally etched black Vitrolite, but was replaced, along with the original glass block surround of the ticket office, possibly in the 1950s. A stepped, recessed-lighted aluminum decoration formerly topped the ticket office, but is now gone. Another Kawneer aluminum molding, Design No. 590, embellishes the top of the ticket office. The molding, like the zig-zag bands, was painted black in the 1950's.

The entrances lead directly into the lobby with its patterned terrazzo floor (See Floor Plan and Photo 11). The eye is immediately drawn up toward the central chandelier (replacing the original streamlined model) and the upper walls which are covered with murals by local artist Paul Roche depicting various fictional figures of the entertainment world, clowns, actors, animals, and settings in dramatic poses (Photos 12-13). At each corner of the mural near the openings to the promenade or mezzanine lounge is a figure with a motion picture camera. The style of painting is indistinct and lightly articulated, giving a misty, dreamy quality to the figures. Some faces are more clearly defined and the theater's owner has been told by long-time patrons that they are portraits of Roche's neighbors and relatives. The dog in the right corner is named Skippy and is said to be the artist's pet. The upper walls are broken by three openings into the promenade on the mezzanine (Photo 12). The openings are embellished by geometric volute panels below each railing. The balustrades are bronze with aluminum top rails. The stepped soffits are original; the identical feature on the three doorways into the theater below was squared off during alterations in the 1950's or 1960's.

The lower walls were originally paneled in grained wood veneer, possibly walnut, over plywood. In the 1950's or 1960's, the walls were covered in a composition material. It is not clear whether the veneer is still in place under the present covering. Separating the mural and the lower wall is a band of zig-zag

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ornament duplicating in composition the aluminum Kawneer bands of the exterior (Photo 12). The lower walls contain poster display cases and, on opposite sides of the lobby, deeper niches which once held aquaria of tropical fish. An early photograph shows one niche had four openings, two of which appeared to hold a lamp, a radio, and a clock, suggesting a display from a nearby store. The walls are now lined with benches, plants and coming-attraction displays. Early photos show that a concession stand once stood in the lobby, as well as mythological busts on columns. The original ticket box, no longer present, was designed by the theater's architect, John J. Zink, and was a miniature version of one of the exterior piers, complete to the graduated colors.

The three doorways into the concession area pass through a small area (shown on the original plans as "lobby"; the circular area now commonly called the lobby was identified as the "foyer") where a subtle change in axis takes place. This is the junction between the axis perpendicular to the north-south street facade and the west-northwest axis of the auditorium. The architect's ingenious solution for the problem of an irregular lot thus provided the maximum seating area as well as the unique feature of the circular lobby. The "lobby" between the circle and the concession area is paneled in wood veneer and on the left wall is a quotation from Thomas Jefferson on the freedoms of press, religion, and person (Photo 14). Not specified on the original plans, this was probably added during World War II, when patriotism ran high in both the movies and the public. A small phone booth occupies the right wall.

On passing through into the present concession area, the concession stand itself is directly across from the doors (Photo 15). In the mid-1980's, the stand was remodeled, taking up three rows in the center section of the auditorium to provide more space for both the vendors and the public. The concession area was originally the standing room section, separated by a row of columns and a low wall from the seating area (Photo 16). The columns remain on either side of the concession stand and flanking the double doors at each aisle. The columns are covered in "Flexwood", a thin wood veneer. Two plain plywood molding bands serve as streamlined capitals. The walls of the enclosed area are also covered in wood veneer (Photo 17). The double doors each have vertical diamond-shaped lights. The wall on the lobby side is plaster.

At the north and south ends of the concession area are exit doors. Near the north door, also the service entrance, is the manager's office, a small functional room leading into a storage room. Originally, the office had a small glass block window which is now blocked by the 1962 cleaners shop addition. The men's lounge and restroom are next to the office. The lounge walls were originally ashlar concrete block with a non-working fireplace and mantel (Photo 18). The mantel remains, but it and the walls have been resurfaced with composition material. A dado runs around the room, which still has its beamed ceiling and broken ceramic tile floor. A maintenance storage area, originally designated as the usher's room, leads off the

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lounge. Another door passes through into the restroom. The toilet partitions are pink Tennessee marble.

The ladies' lounge and restroom is at the opposite end of the concession area. Where the men's lounge is square and angular, the ladies' lounge is curving and flowing in line (Photo 19). The lounge is circular and has plastered and painted walls. The original design featured a pastel-mirrored fireplace and mantel opposite the door and tapestry-covered walls. The mantelpiece is now gone. A small entry foyer, formed when the original arrangement of the stalls was altered during construction, leads into the restroom. The original black and white tile has been replaced with all-white tile.

The mezzanine promenade is reached by an enclosed iron-railed staircase of three flights. The promenade is a generally rectangular area with one curved wall formed by the upper lobby with its three overlooks. Two Flexwood-covered columns are located in the center of the promenade. The wall lights in the promenade are wrought iron and glass fixtures from the demolished Valencia Theater which stood in the unit block of West Lexington Street in downtown Baltimore. The swirl-figured carpet in black, beige, and red in this area is the original installation (Photo 20). Directly opposite the curved wall is the projection room. It contains all the working equipment of the theater, projectors, rewind platters, sound and lighting controls, and work tables. Flanking the projection room are two private viewing rooms. The north room was originally equipped with amplifiers for deaf patrons at each seat. The south room was the original nursery, with two rows of seats in front of an open area furnished with a playpen, children's table and chairs, and high chairs. Stenciled cartoon characters embellished the back wall above the veneered dado. The room now has four rows of seats.

The auditorium retains its original size and configuration except for the concession stand alteration described above. Seating 929, it is one of the few undivided movie theater auditoria of the pre-World War II period existing in Baltimore (Photo 21). On entering, attention is drawn to the ceiling above the screen, where a semi-circular line of light prisms in red and green is illuminated. A further row of light boxes edges the central ceiling area. The ceiling along the sides was originally painted in a stylized mural of clouds and lines. The ceiling is now a uniform beige color. The walls, covered with ceiling-to-floor draperies converge toward the proscenium, terminating in fluted piers, their bases decorated with geometric volute and medallion panels (Photos 22-23). These were highlighted originally in gold leaf, but are now painted in matte finish beige. The stage is fronted by curved and fluted light shields. The angles along the side walls contain wall lights which are part of the original equipment, but which have lost their upper portions (Photo 24). A series of graduated trumpet shapes topped with a plume, this part of the lights was removed in the 1950's. The walls originally had a plaster dado decorated with curving, half-round, gold leaf moldings. The upper walls were covered in tapestry. The walls now have sound equipment placed at several points.

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See Continuation Sheet 7/6

THE SENATOR THEATRE
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Baltimore, Maryland
Floor Plan
Not to scale
Source: Original architect's
Plans, 1939

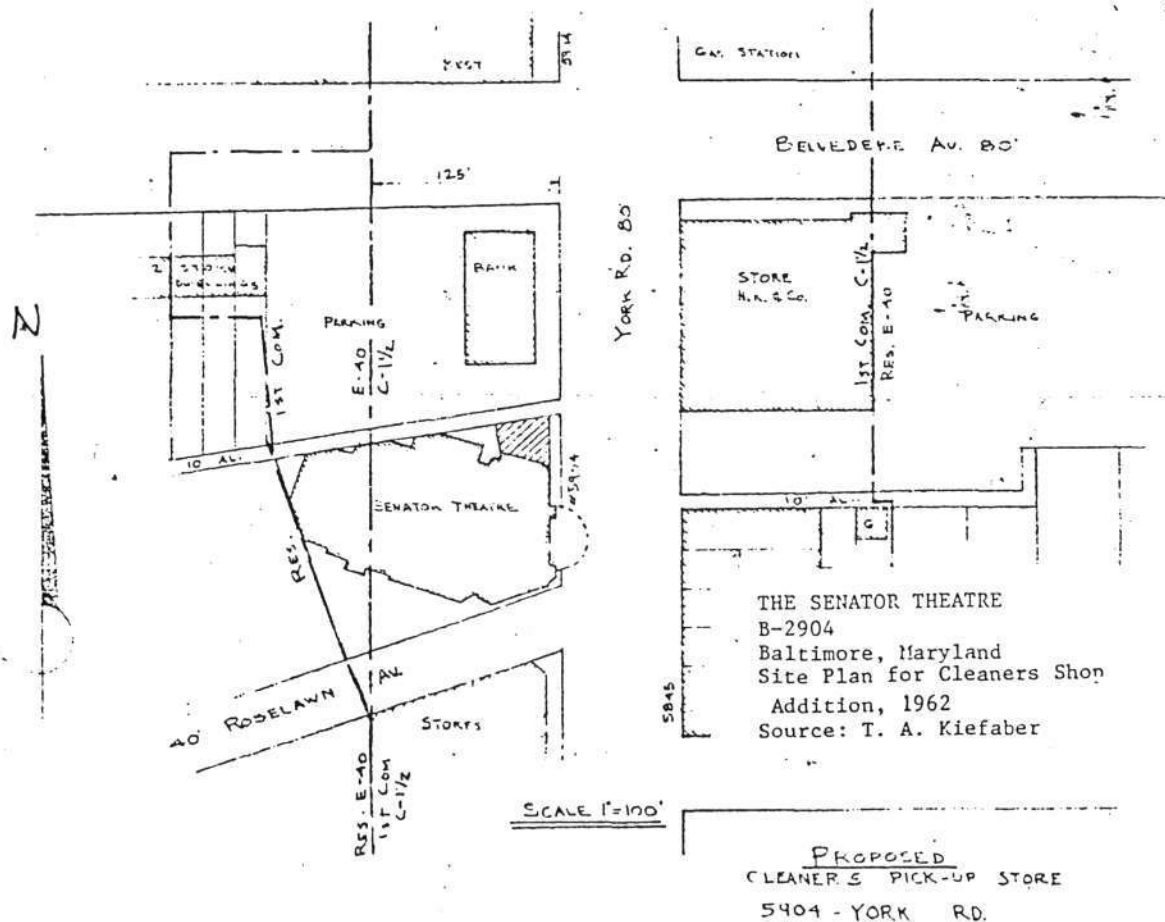
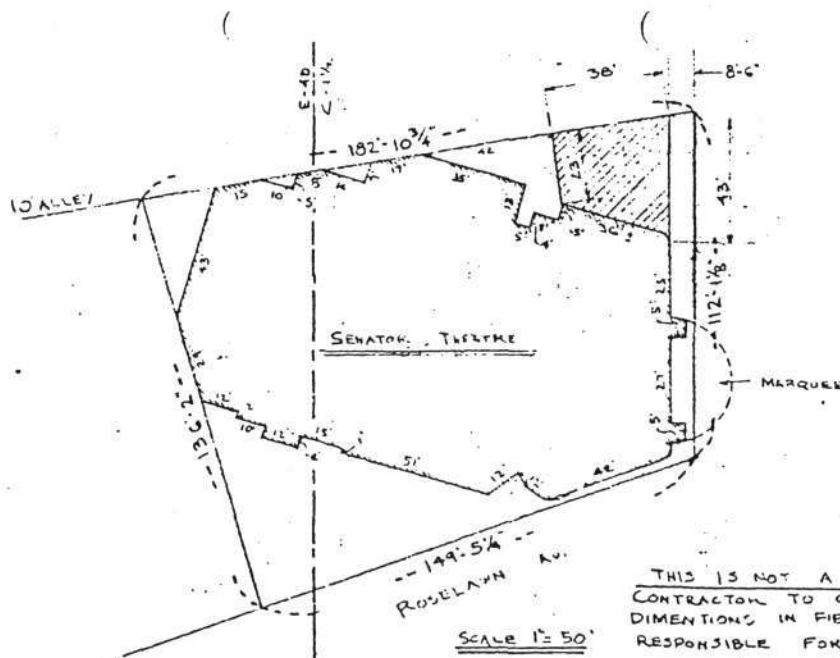
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HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Piedmont

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

Modern Period A.D. 1930 - Present

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture/Landscape Architecture/Community Planning

Resource Type:

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Suburban

Historic Function(s) or Uses(s):

Recreation and Culture/Theater/Movie Theater

Known Design Source: John J. Zink, Architect

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B-2094Section number 8 Page 2HISTORIC SETTING:

The city of Baltimore, founded in the late eighteenth century, was focused on its port and related trade through much of its history. By the early twentieth century, however, the city's growth began to include activities not specifically related to industry. The area of recreation and cultural activity responded to population growth and prosperity as well as to the technological advances of the period. Photography improved and motion picture development led to the proliferation of motion picture parlors and theaters. From a simple assembly hall beginning, the improvement of visual quality and, most importantly, sound in the late 1920's spurred the growth of a new building type, the movie theater. Although slowed by the economic conditions of the Great Depression in the 1930's, the city's population grew and suburbs developed. As the automobile and streetcar made transport available to all, the historical concentration of activities in the central city declined and movie theaters, along with churches, banks, schools, stores, and other amenities formerly associated with "downtown" began to appear in suburbs convenient to the newest residential areas. Nearly 100 movie theaters operated in Baltimore in the 1920's and 1930's. One burgeoning suburban area was the Govans section and specifically the York Road running through the suburb. Here on the historic turnpike to York, Pennsylvania appeared the strips of shops and services, concentrating in nodes near the major cross routes. That near the Northern Parkway became the location of the first suburban branch of a major local department store, Hochschild-Kohn, in 1949. Ten years earlier, The Senator Theatre had been erected in the same block of York Road directly opposite the store location. The theater was one of the earliest commercial structures in this small shopping district.

RESOURCE HISTORY:

The Senator Theatre was built by Durkee Enterprises. Frank Durkee (1888-1955) was born in Baltimore and started in the motion picture business in about 1908 by carrying his movie equipment from hall to hall. His first permanent location was the Paradise in a two-story house at Washington and Federal Streets. In addition to taking tickets, he also sang behind the screen during features. In 1916, Durkee went into partnership with Charles E. Nolte and C.W. Pacey, both theater operators in their own rights. By 1921, the Durkee firm owned the Elektra Plaza, Aladdin, Palace, Colonial, Patterson, Grand, and Belvedere in addition to their original three, the Paradise, the Garden and the Linwood. By 1926, they added five more theaters. Eight more theaters were built or acquired by 1935. In 1935, they built the Ambassador, their most elaborate theater to date. (The Ambassador still stands, but is no longer used as a theater.) Between 1935 and 1939, the year Durkee built The Senator Theatre, two more theaters were added to the chain.

The Durkee chain specialized in neighborhood movie houses rather than first-run downtown palaces, but in the mid-1930's they began building theaters in the Art

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Deco style which rivaled the downtown houses in beauty and comfort. The Ambassador was designed by John J. Zink, who also designed The Senator Theatre. The Ambassador was the first Art Deco theater in Baltimore. It closed in 1968 and has since been altered. The Senator Theatre, built four years later in 1939, is the best surviving theater of this type and has been in continuous use since it opened. Built at a cost of \$250,000, the theater was one of the most impressive of the Durkee Chain. According to a contemporary account, it was immediately recognized as architecturally significant:

"... it embodies a striking modern architectural treatment in which the use of glass brick and fluorescent lighting have been combined to produce a spectacular night display."²

The use of glass block surrounding the drum of the round lobby is the most extensive decorative use of the material in any Baltimore structure. Other buildings such as the Green Spring Dairy feature glass block elements, but never with the intent of making a dramatic facade through the use of back lighting and different types of glass block in patterns. The Senator Theatre's lobby was apparently so admired that Durkee added a parapet to the Northway Theater which is similar to a single bay of The Senator Theatre's lobby. The painted murals were executed by Paul Roche, a well-known local artist who also completed murals in the present Charles Theater and the Enoch Pratt Library Central Building.

John J. Zink (1886-1952) was born in Baltimore and spent most of his life in the Baltimore-Washington area where he designed more than 30 movie theaters. He was trained at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. After graduation, he worked with Wyatt and Nolting, one of the most prominent firms in Baltimore in the early twentieth century. Prior to World War I, Zink studied theater architecture with Thomas Lamb in New York, attending the Columbia School of Architecture in the evenings. Returning to Baltimore about 1918, he was associated with Ewald B. Blanke and later with W.O. Sparklin. During the period when "atmospheric" theater design was very popular, Zink's work was very plain by comparison. His interests lay in the technology of theater design, achieving the best sight lines and acoustics possible. This is evident in The Senator Theatre in the skilled integration of the axial change for maximizing the seating area, a need which may have been the inspiration for the circular lobby. Among the local theaters designed by Zink are the Bridge, Patterson, Edgewood, Ambassador, Senator, Colony, Town (interior), Century, Harford, Linden, and Northway. Of these, only The Senator Theatre and the Patterson are still used as movie houses.³

RESOURCE ANALYSIS:

The Senator Theatre is a significant example of the Art Deco style in suburban movie theaters in Baltimore. Built in 1939, it was one of several built by Durkee Enterprises beginning in the mid-1930's which rivaled the earlier movie palaces of

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downtown Baltimore. It displays the characteristics of the Art Deco style in its extensive decorative use of glass block, pigmented structural glass (Vitrolite), zig-zag aluminum moldings, and the verticality of its primary feature, the round lobby. Its interior details further exemplify the Art Deco design movement: decorative panels of foliated volutes, highly stylized mural paintings, veneered walls, geometric lighting fixtures, and patterned floor.

Of the several theaters built in this style by the Durkee organization, The Senator Theatre is the only theater still in operation. The Patterson, also designed by John J. Zink, was built in 1930 in an oriental interior style. Its exterior is more similar to earlier theaters with its extensive use of brick and its vertical sign. The Ambassador's exterior style is comparable to The Senator Theatre in its use of geometric planes and horizontal bands, but its interior has been greatly changed since it closed as a theater in 1968 and was adapted for other commercial use. Among other theaters of the period in Baltimore, only the Earle, designed by John Eyring, and built in 1937 on Bel Air Road approaches The Senator Theatre in the amount of original detail still intact. The Earle is a much smaller theater, seating 700, and low in scale. Its exterior is primarily brick and it is flanked on both sides by adjoining shops. It has etched Vitrolite panels and decorative metalwork around the entrances. Its interior features are unknown.

The Senator Theatre meets the architecture criterion of the National Register because it retains most of its exterior and interior Art Deco details. In this, it is unique among suburban movie theaters in Baltimore. The integrity of the historic architectural features is amazingly complete, given the constantly shifting needs and challenges of the motion picture industry. Where changes have been made, the structural integrity of The Senator Theatre has been respected. The current owner of the theater, Thomas A. Kiefaber, plans to expand the theater by adding two new, smaller auditoria in sympathetically designed additions on the north and south elevations. Only the 1962 cleaners shop is slated for demolition. Mr. Kiefaber plans to restore much of the exterior and interior features which have been removed and to refurnish its lobby and lounges with period furniture. The original ticket office, lobby, and central marquee will remain in use, with access to the new theaters from the original building. On October 5, 1989, The Senator Theatre will mark its Golden Anniversary. It stands alone as the best surviving theater of its type in Baltimore.

¹ Headley, Robert K., Jr., Exit: A History of Movies in Baltimore, 1974. Private publ. pp. 14-15.

² "New Notes of the Amusement Realm," Power Pictorial, No. 44 (February 1940), p. 19.

³ Exit, footnote, pp. 30-31.

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Headley, Robert K., Jr., Exit: A History of Movies in Baltimore. Private publication, University Park, Maryland, 1974.

Land Records of Baltimore City.

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties: Baltimore. Maryland Historical Trust, Annapolis, Maryland.

Personal interviews with Thomas A. Kiefaber, owner and manager of The Senator Theatre, March-April, 1989.

Personal interview, by phone, with Fred Schmuff, Durkee Enterprises, April 25, 1989.

Power Pictorial, No. 44 (February 1940), "New Notes of the Amusement Realm," pp. 19-20.

Specifications and plans for Theater Building at 5904-6 York Road, Baltimore, Maryland for Govans Corp., John J. Zink, AIA, Architect. March 1, 1939. In possession of Thomas A. Kiefaber.

"The Senator: Baltimore's Theater of Distinction," Keeping Time, Vol. 1, Nos. 1 & 2. Winter and Spring 1989, pp. 3 and 5 (Newsletter of Baltimore City Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation).

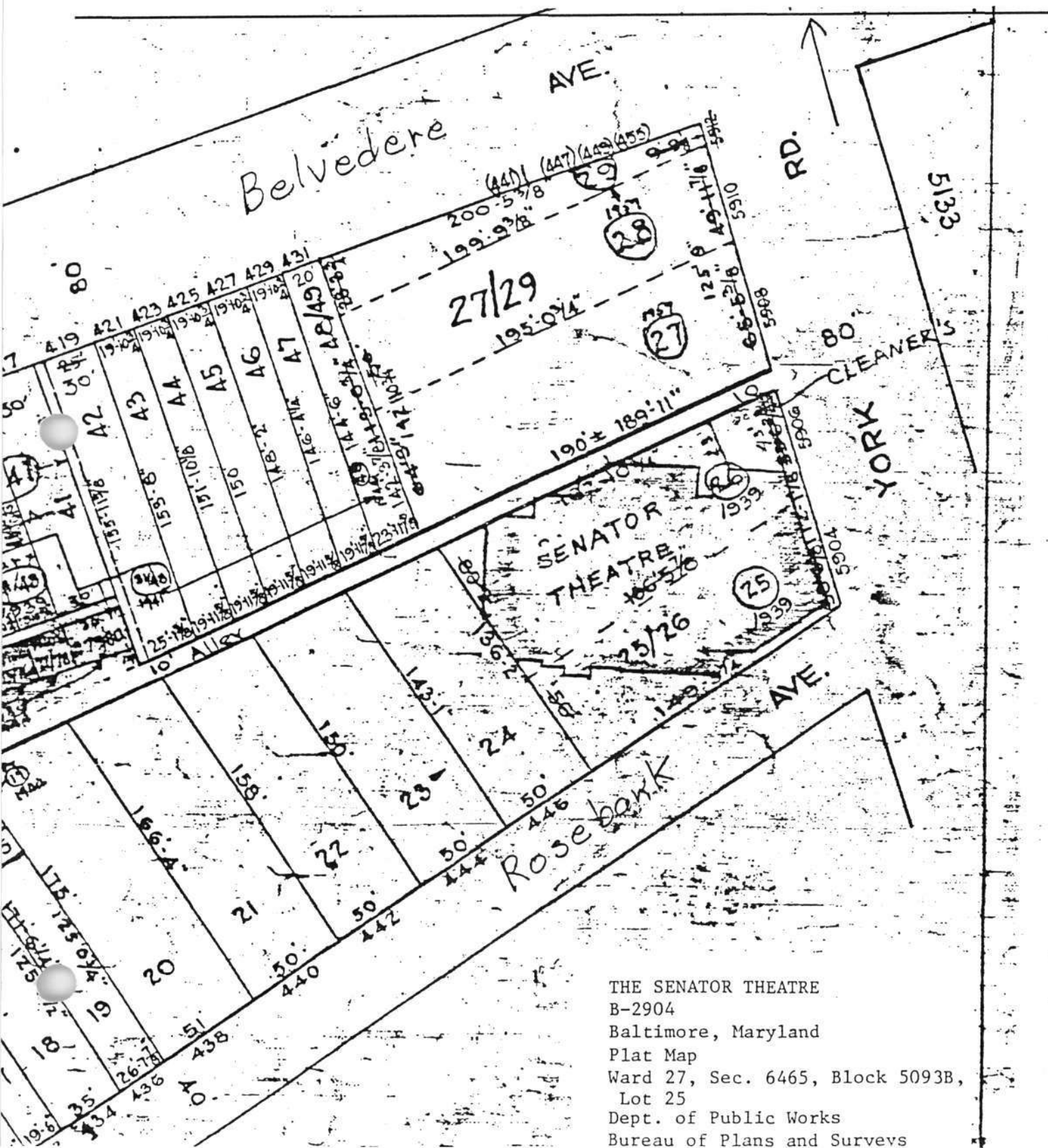
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

The Senator Theatre
Baltimore
Maryland

B-2904
~~B-2094~~

Section number 10 Page 1



THE SENATOR THEATRE
B-2904
Baltimore, Maryland
Plat Map
Ward 27, Sec. 6465, Block 5093B,
Lot 25
Dept. of Public Works
Bureau of Plans and Surveys

5662' NW
(COCKEYSVILLE)

361000m.F

TOWSON 1.7 MI

362

363

35

Baltimore

Maryland

18/361230/4358170





The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Ernest Davis

April 1989

Neg. loc.: Thomas A. Kiebler

5904 York Rd.

Baltimore, Md. 21212

View from northeast

3/24



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Jared Davis

April 1989

Neg. loc: Thomas A. Kielbaso

5904 York St.

Baltimore, Md. 21212

East elevation

2/24



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

Neg. loc.: Thomas A. Kiefaber

5904 York Rd.

Baltimore, Md. 21212

Lobby, general view from entrance

11/24



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

Neg. loc.: Thomas A. Kiefaber
5904 York Rd.

Baltimore, Md. 21212

Detail, wall lights

24/24



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

Neg. loc.: Thomas A. Kiefaber
5904 York Rd.

Baltimore, Md. 21212

Detail, volute panel

23/24



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Auditorium, general view from stage

Ca 1945

Neg. loc.: Thomas A. Kiefaber

5904 York Rd.

Baltimore, MD 21212

5/11



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

General view, auditorium

Ca. 1945

Neg. loc: Thomas A. Kiefaber

5904 York Rd.

Baltimore, MD 21212

3/11



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

View of lobby interior

Ca. 1945

Neg. loc: Thomas A. Kietaber

5904 York Rd.

Baltimore, MD 21212

2/11



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

View south on York Road from Belvedere Ave.

Ca. 1945

Neg. loc.: Thomas A. Kietlber

5904 York Rd.

Baltimore, MD 21212

1/11

8-2904



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore Maryland

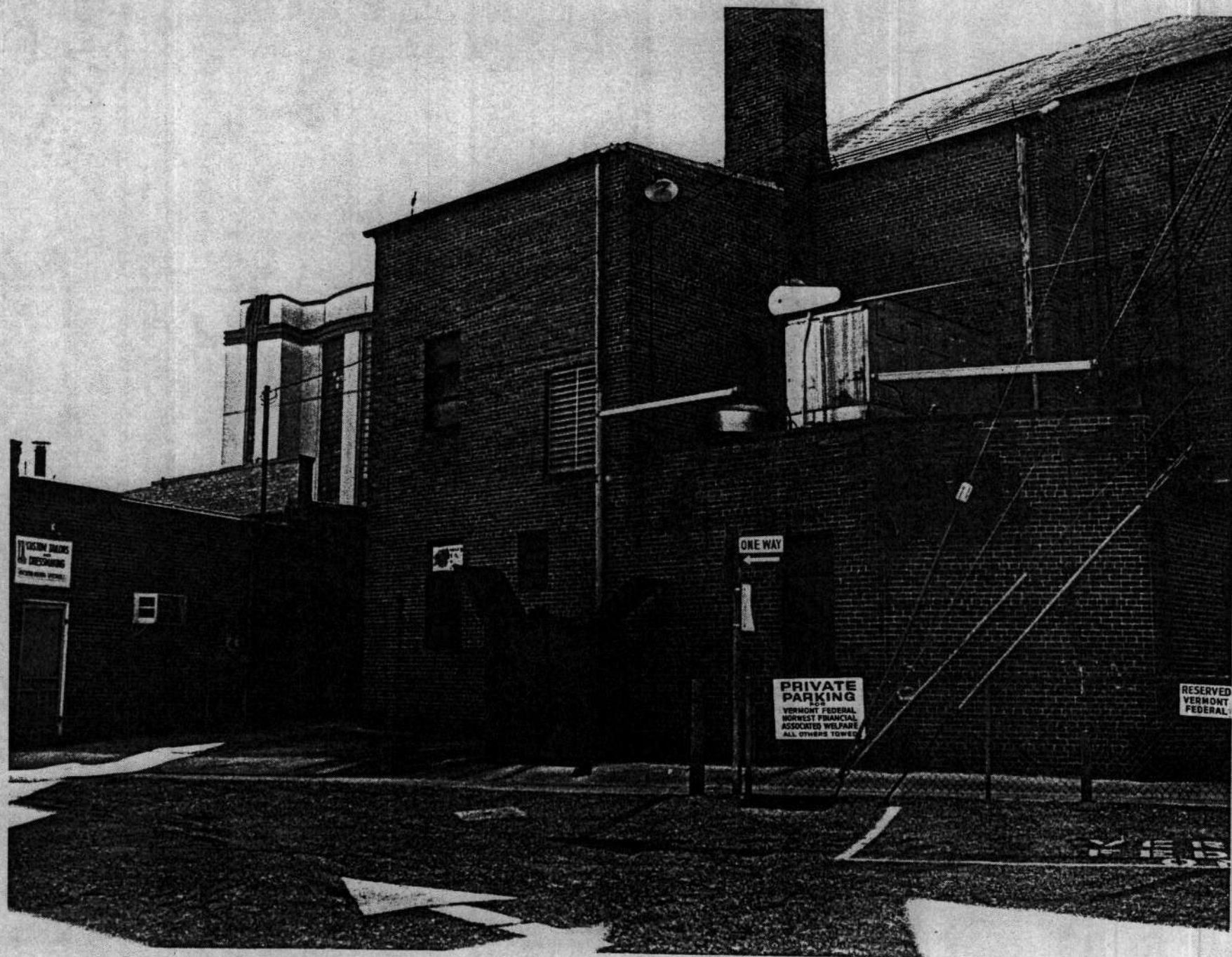
Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

Neighborhood: Thomas A. Kiefaber
5904 York Rd.
Baltimore, Md. 21212

Main entrance from southeast

1/22



W. Carver Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

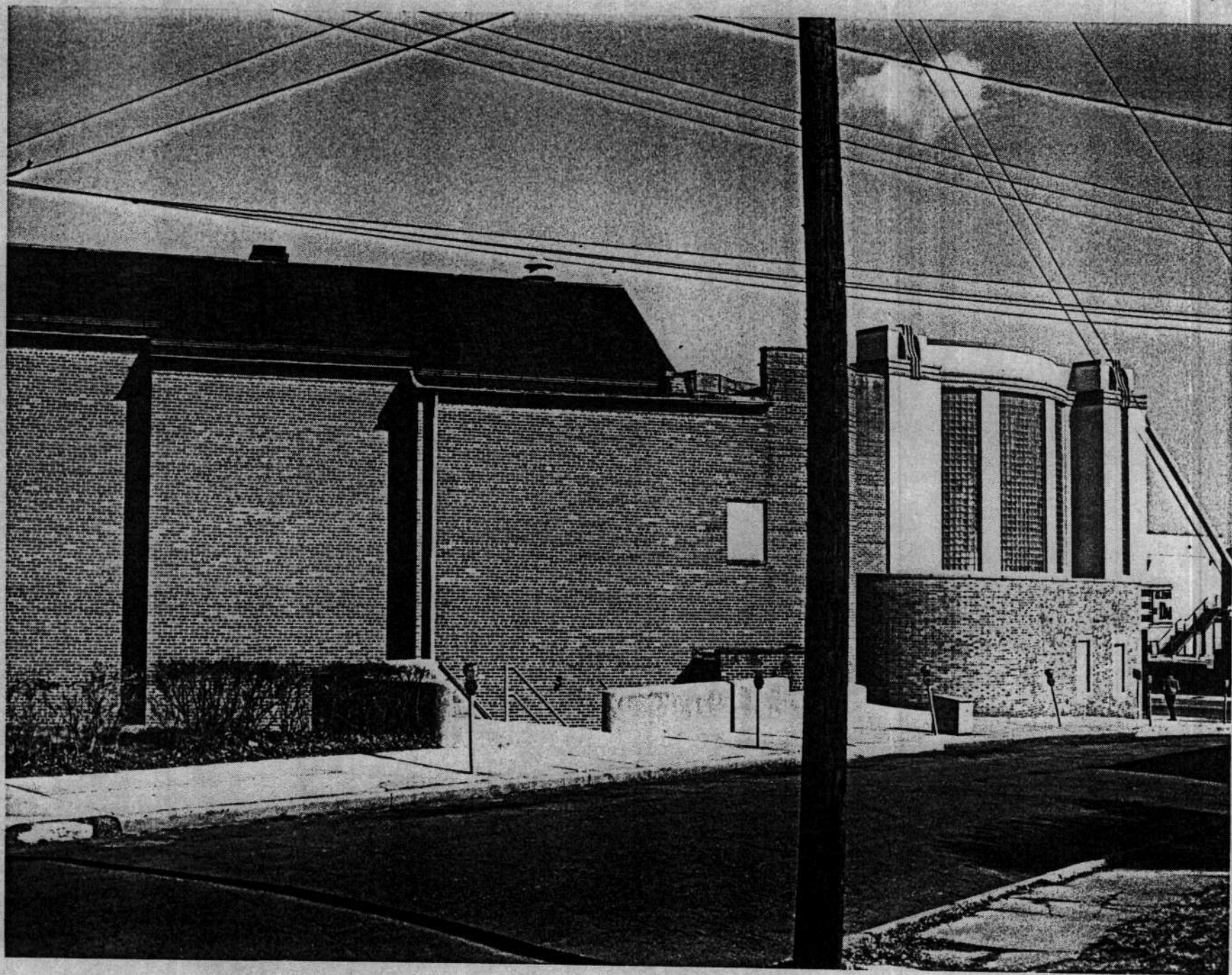
No. 100 Thomas A. McLean

East York Rd.

Baltimore, Md. 21212

North end and rear of cleaners shop addition

4/24



The Cupator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

John J. Davis

April 1989

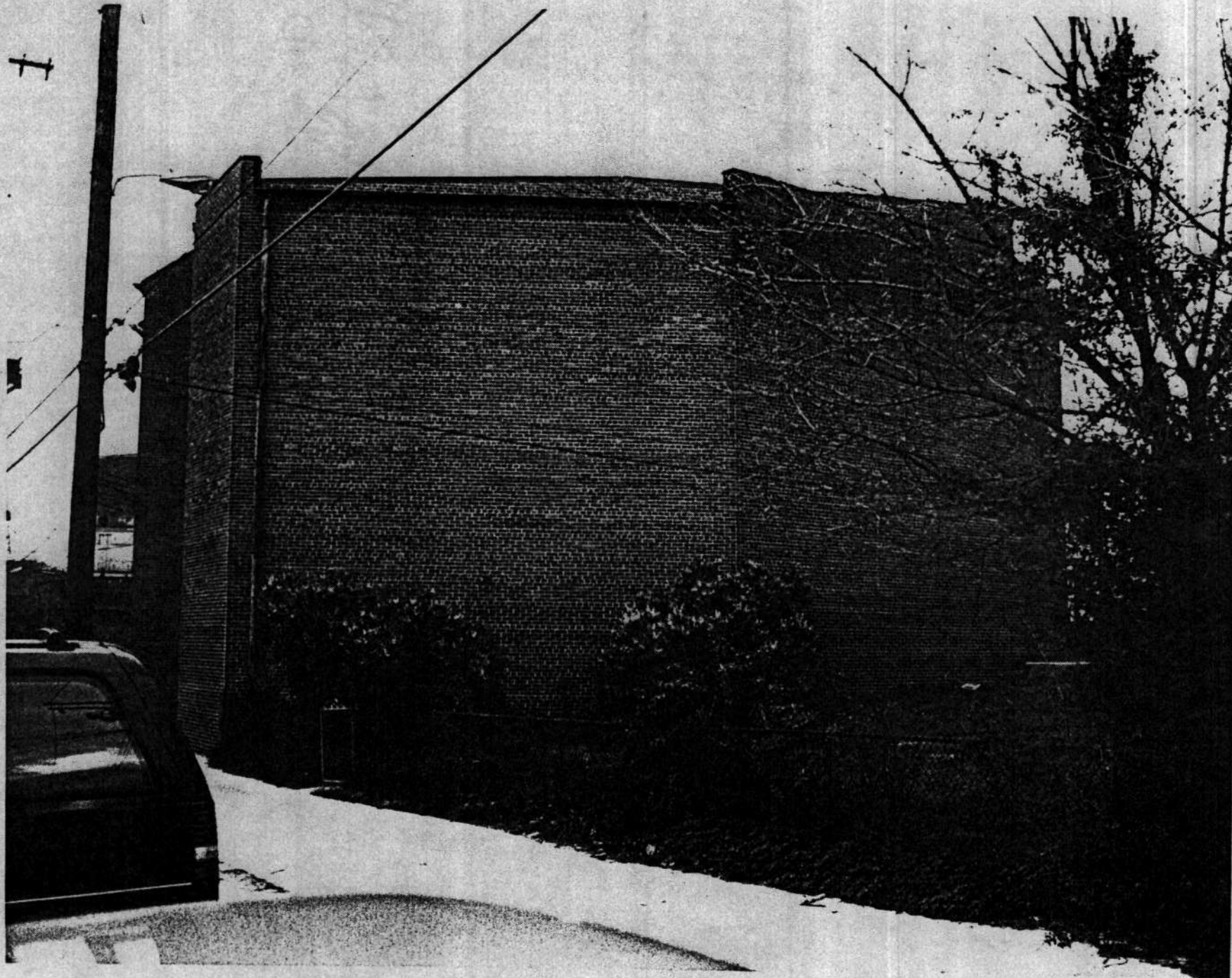
John J. Davis, A. Kretzler

1989, 1989, 1989

Baltimore, Md. 21212

South Baltimore

1989



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

May 1989

Neg. loc: Thomas A. Kietaber

5904 York Rd.

Baltimore, MD 21212

West elevation

5-24



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

May 1989

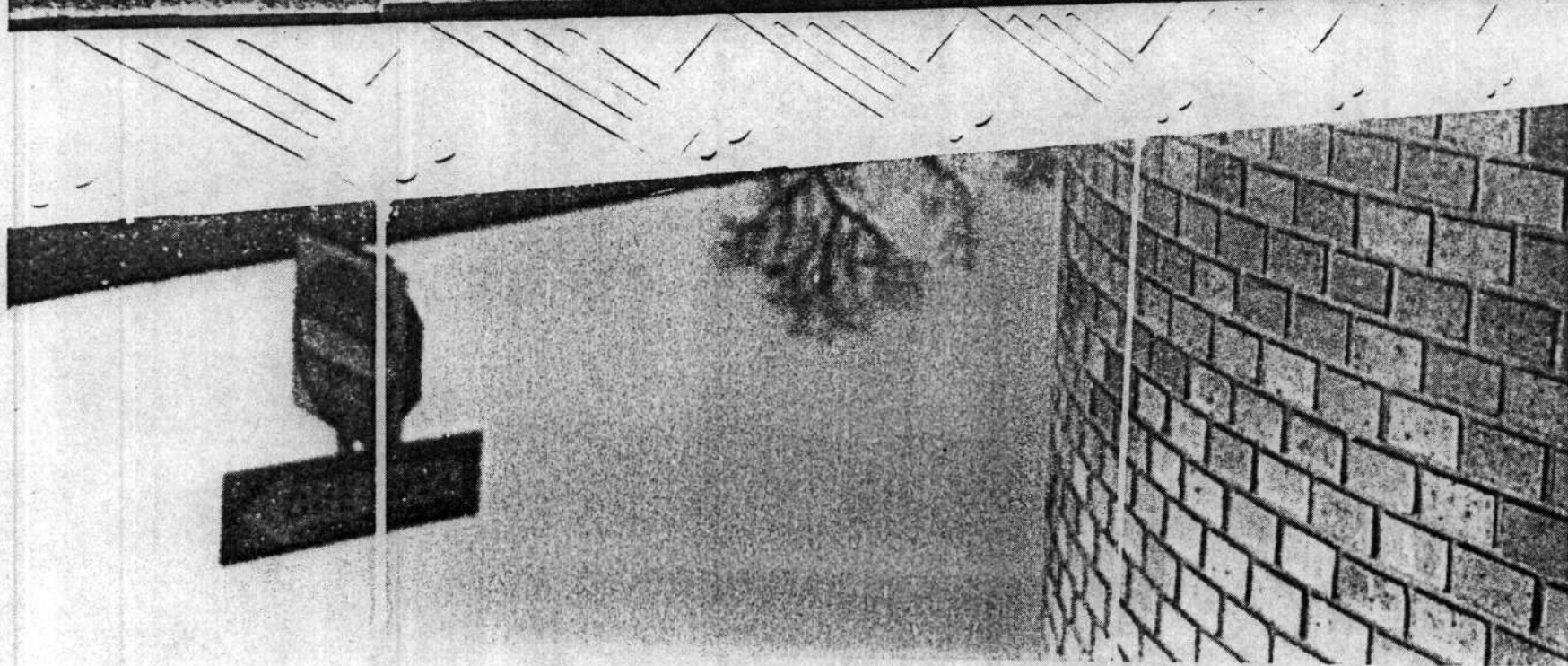
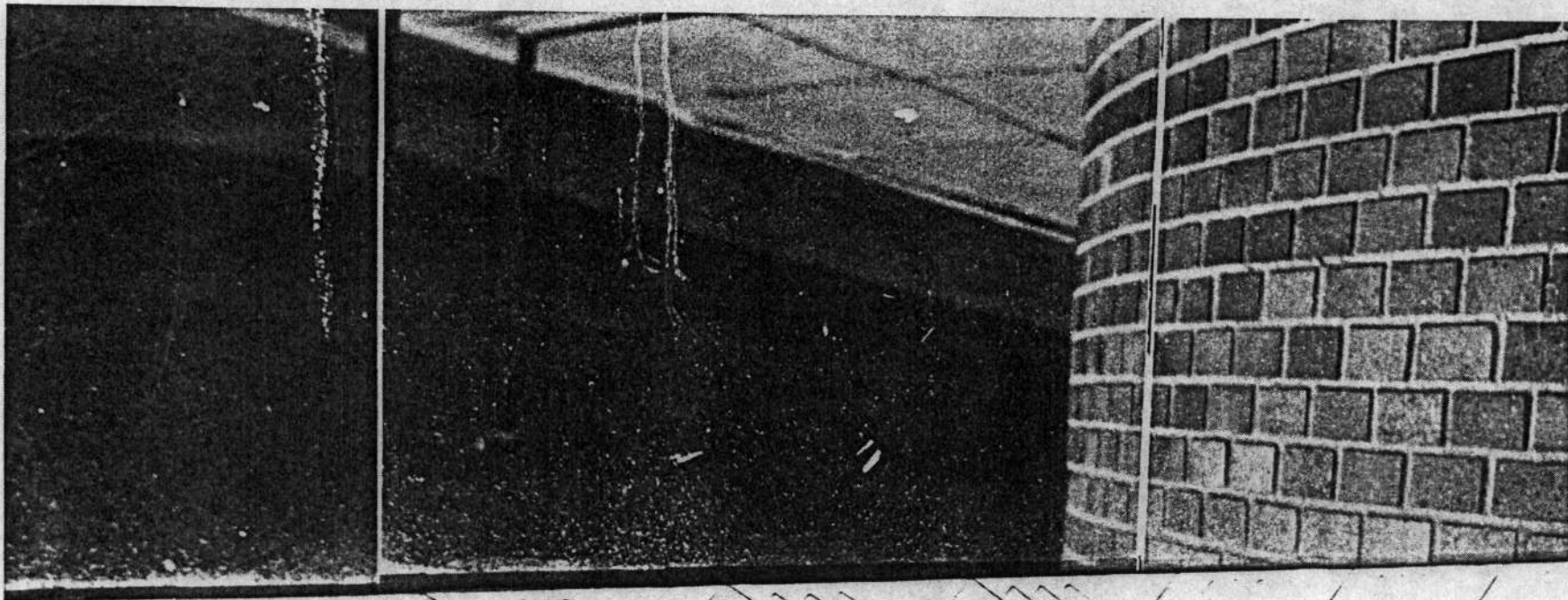
Neg. loc.: Thomas A. Kiefaber

5904 York Road

Baltimore, MD 21212

Area on south elevation

7/24



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

1100 W. Lombard Ave. Baltimore

1st York Rd

Photograph of

Photograph of

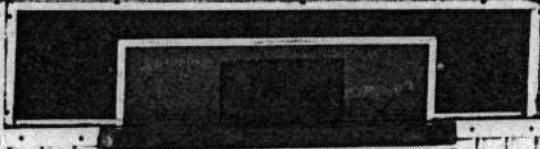
8/1/89

5904

DANGEROUS
LIAISONS
2:30 5:00
7:30 10:00
CHILD \$3.00
SENIOR \$3.00
ADULT \$5.00



NOTICE CHILDREN UNDER 6
YEARS OF AGE
NOT ADMITTED



The Auditor Theatre B-2904

Eol in great Newland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

11. Thomas A. Kieffer
1904 York Ed.

Orderly Office

62



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

May 1989

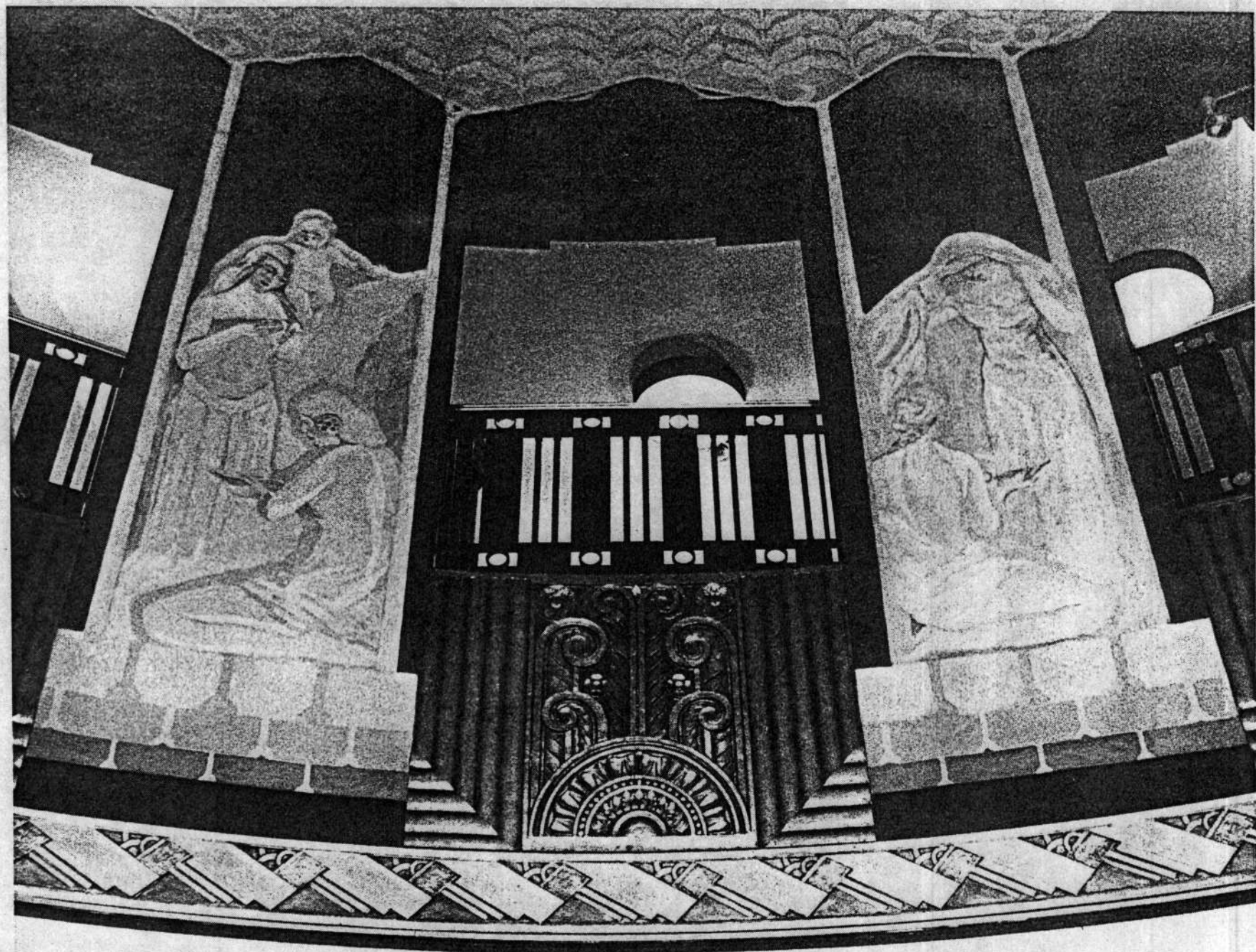
Neg. loc.: Thomas A. Kietlacher

5904 York Road

Baltimore, MD 21212

Detail, entrance doors

12/24



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

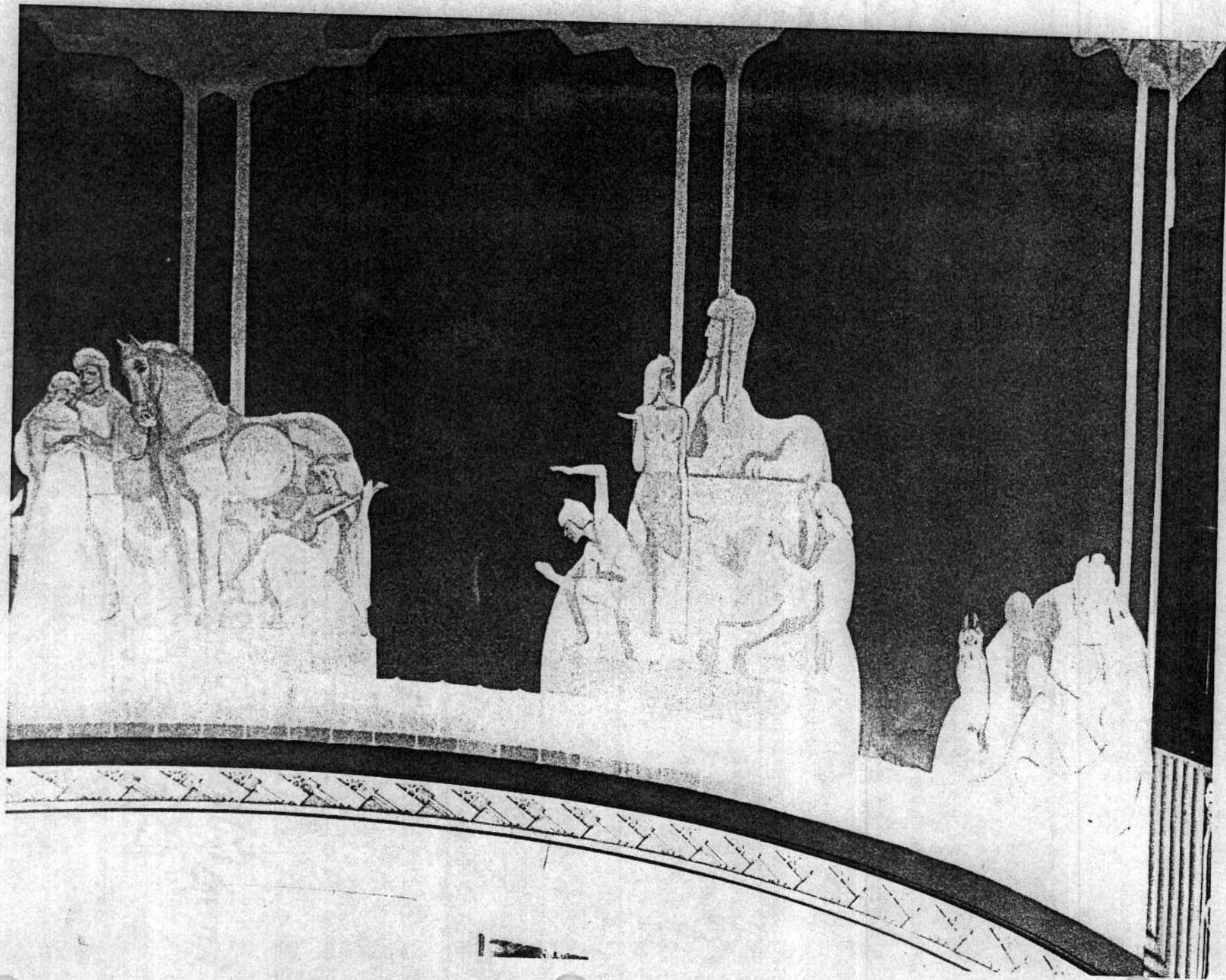
Neg. loc.: Thomas A. Kiefaber

57th York Rd.

Baltimore, Md. 21212

Exterior lobby mural, volute panel, and promenade balcony

1989



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

Day: 2001 Thomas A. Kie-2001

5704 York Rd.

Baltimore, Md. 21212

Detail: lobby mural

2/22



FREEDOM OF RELIGION
FREEDOM OF THE PRESS
FREEDOM OF THE PERSON
THESE PRINCIPALS FORM THE BRIGHT
CONSTELLATION WHICH HAS GONE
BEFORE US AND GUIDED OUR STEPS
THOMAS JEFFERSON

The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

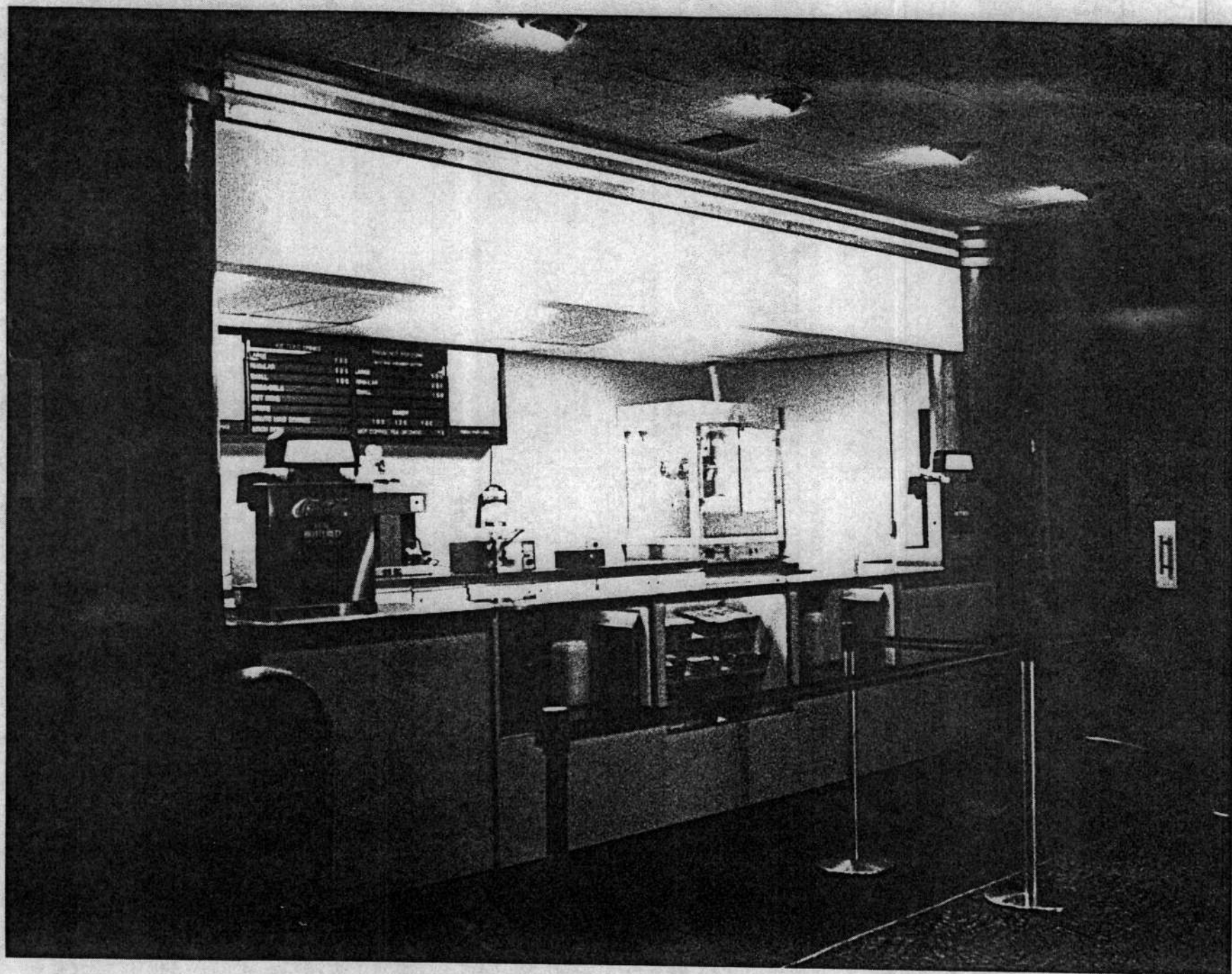
May. 1989 Thomas A. Kiefaber

5904 York Rd.

Baltimore, Md. 21212

Engraving inscription on foyer wall

1989



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

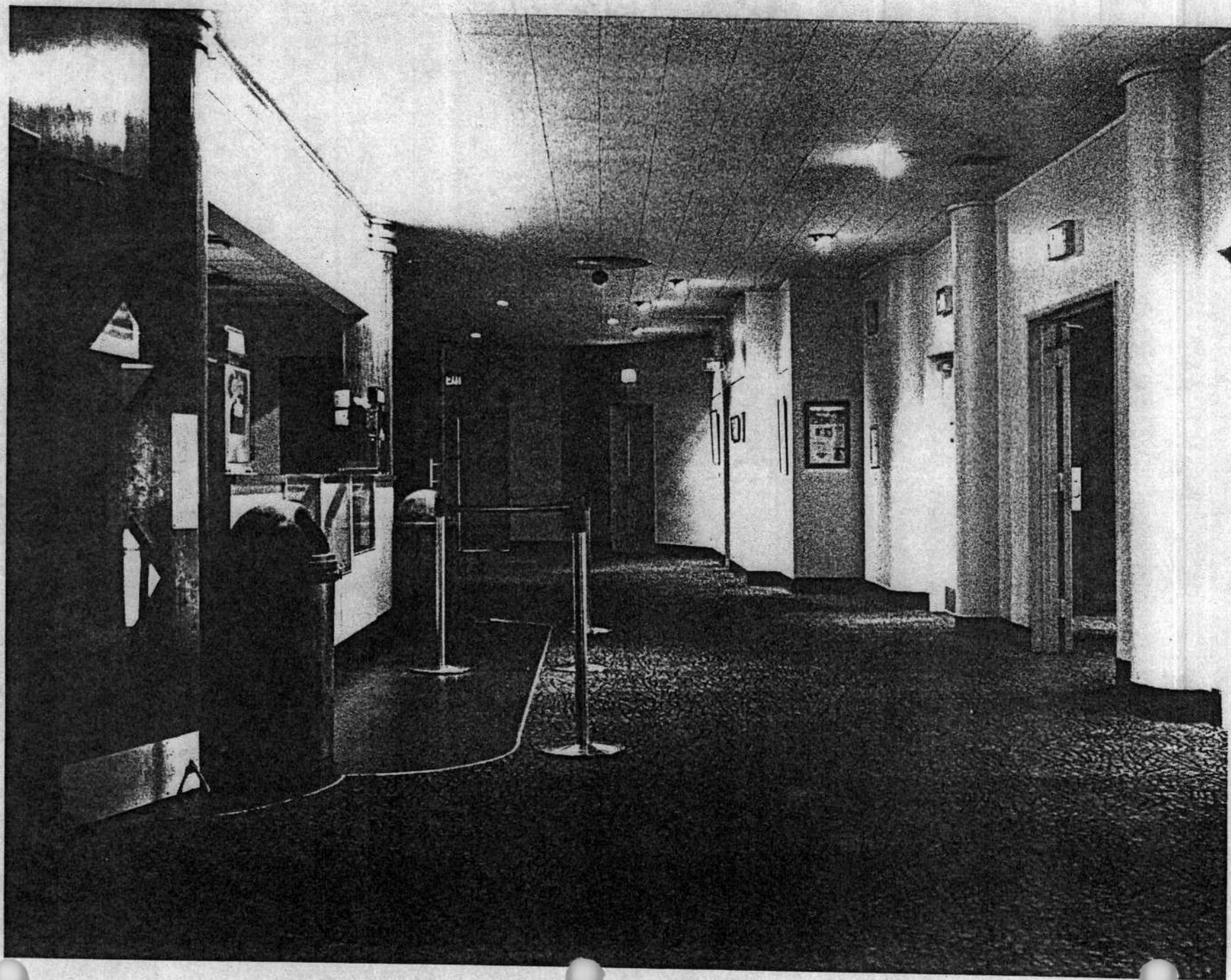
April 1989

Rep. Louis Thomas A. Kiehaner

10th York Rd.

Baltimore Md. 21212

Chesapeake Bay



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

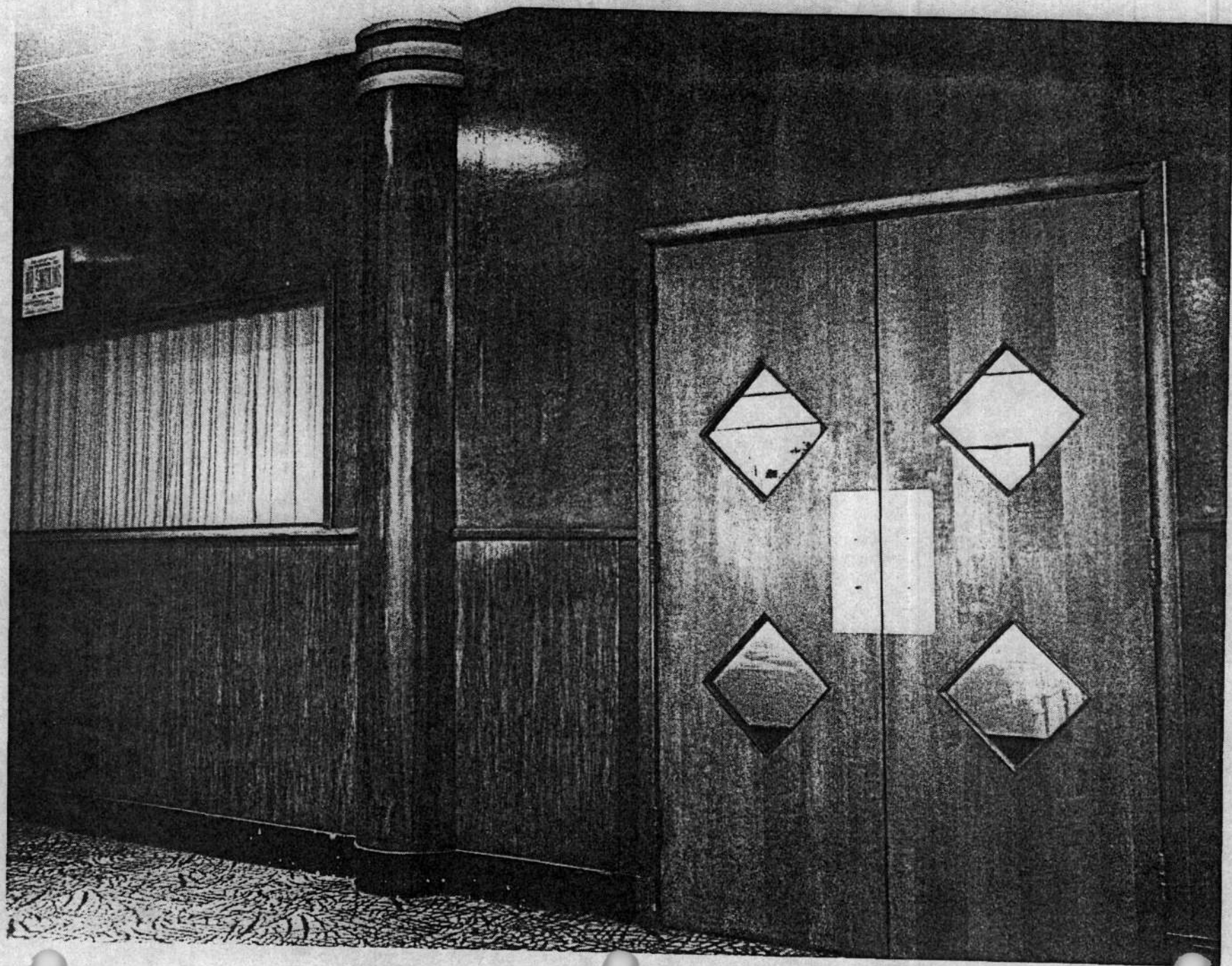
Mtg. loc.: Thomas A. Kiefhaber

577 York Rd.

Baltimore, Md. 212

Concession area, former standing room area

16/24



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

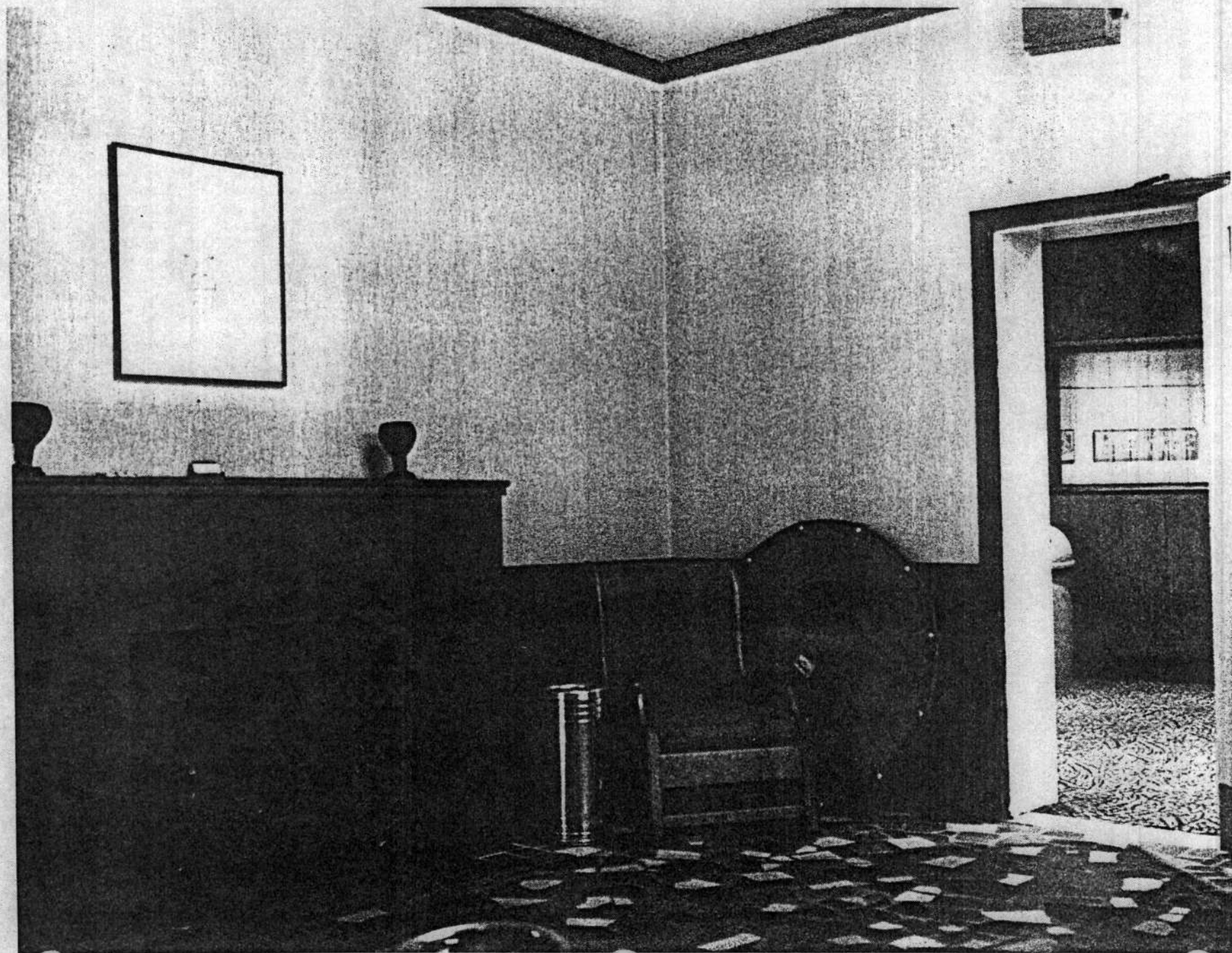
April 1989

Model: Thomas A. Kieffer

3404 York Rd.

Baltimore, Md. 21218

Interior, including doors and paneling



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

Designated: Thomas A. Kiefaber

5904 York Rd.

Baltimore, Md 21212

Phone: Long 6



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

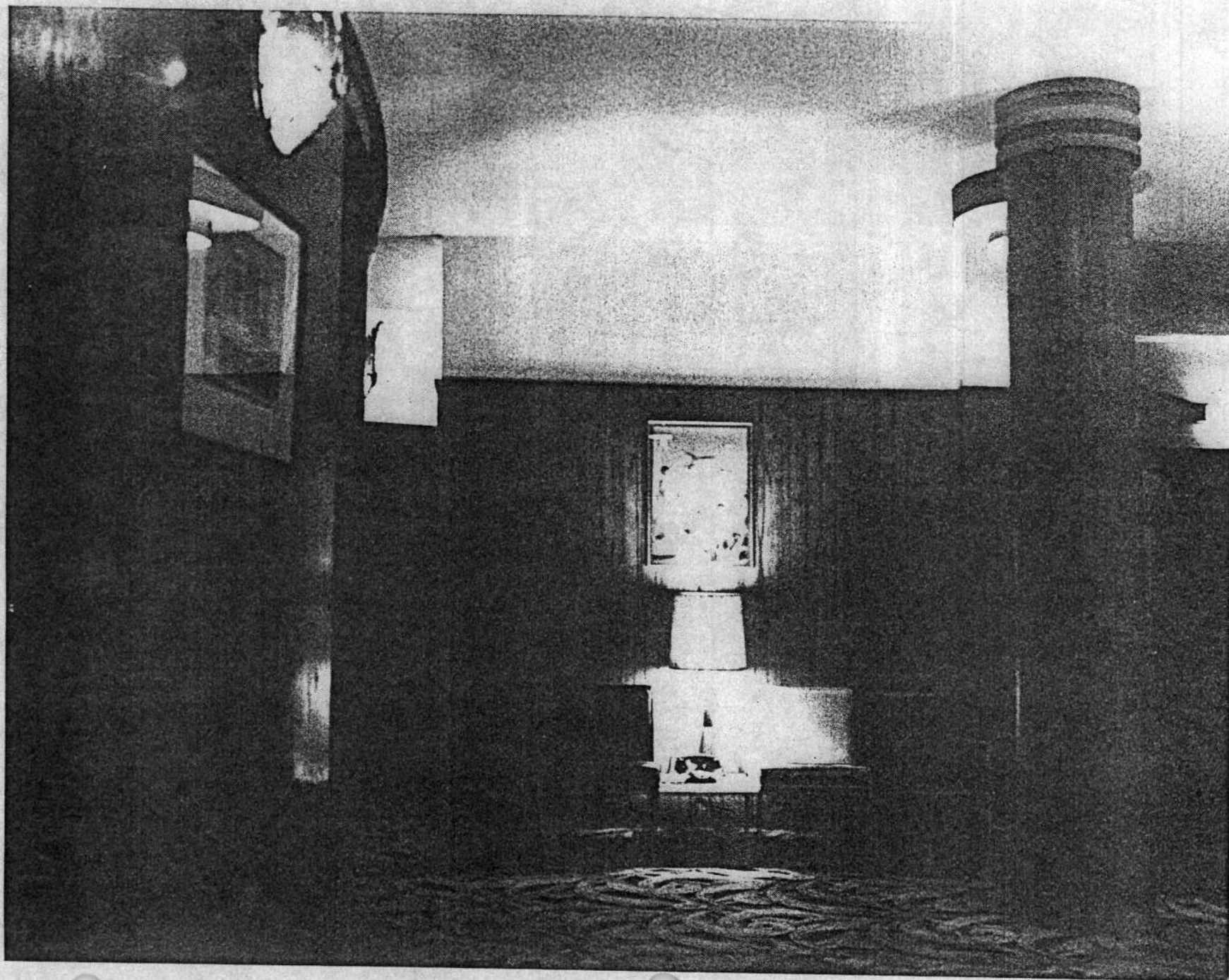
Neg. no.: Thomas A. Kiefaber

5904 York Rd

Baltimore Md. 21212

Ladies Lounge

10 pg



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

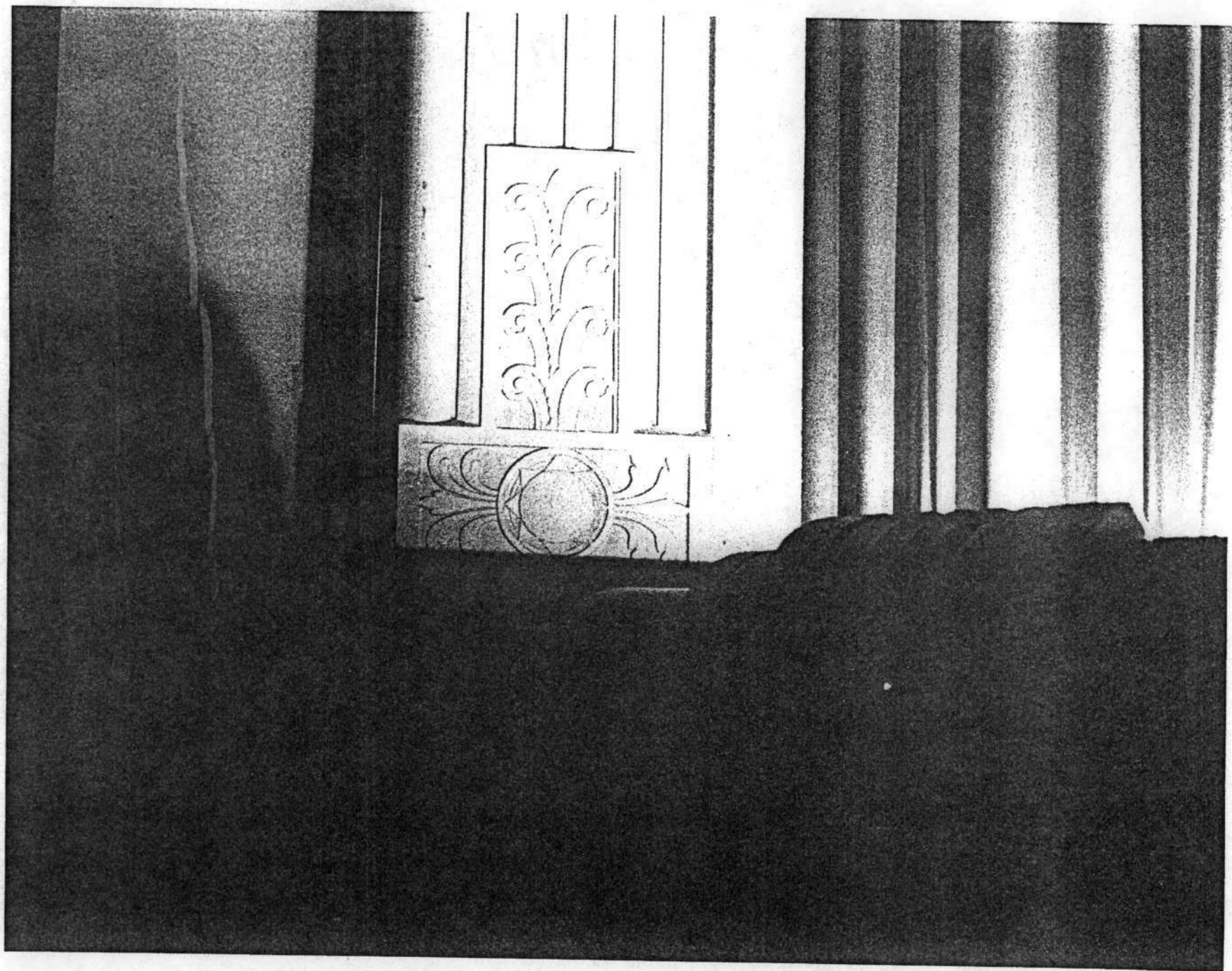
Neg. loc.: Thomas A. Kiefaber

5104 York Rd.

Baltimore, Md 21212

Examenade

20/29



The Senator Theatre B-2904

Baltimore, Maryland

Photographer: Janet Davis

April 1989

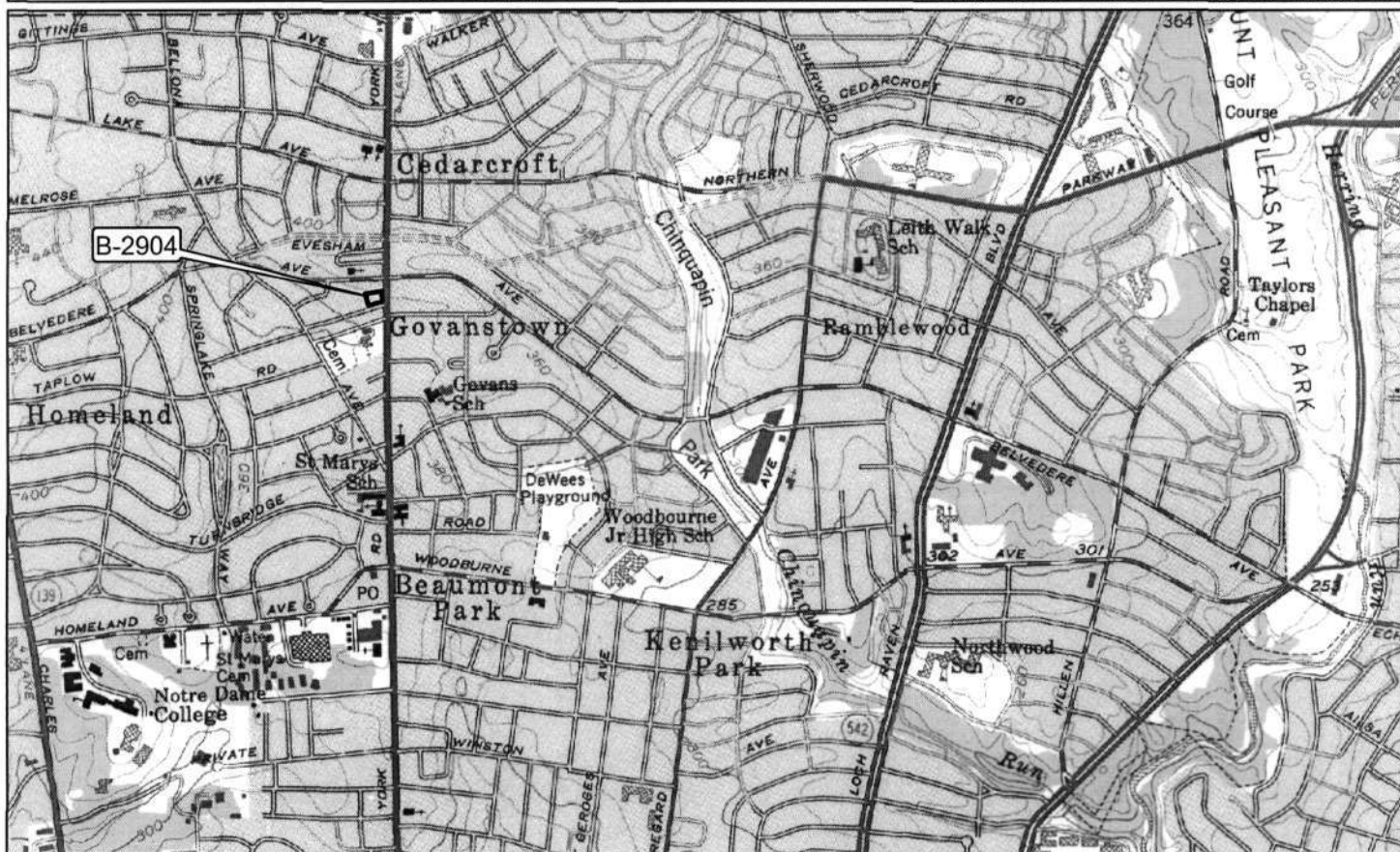
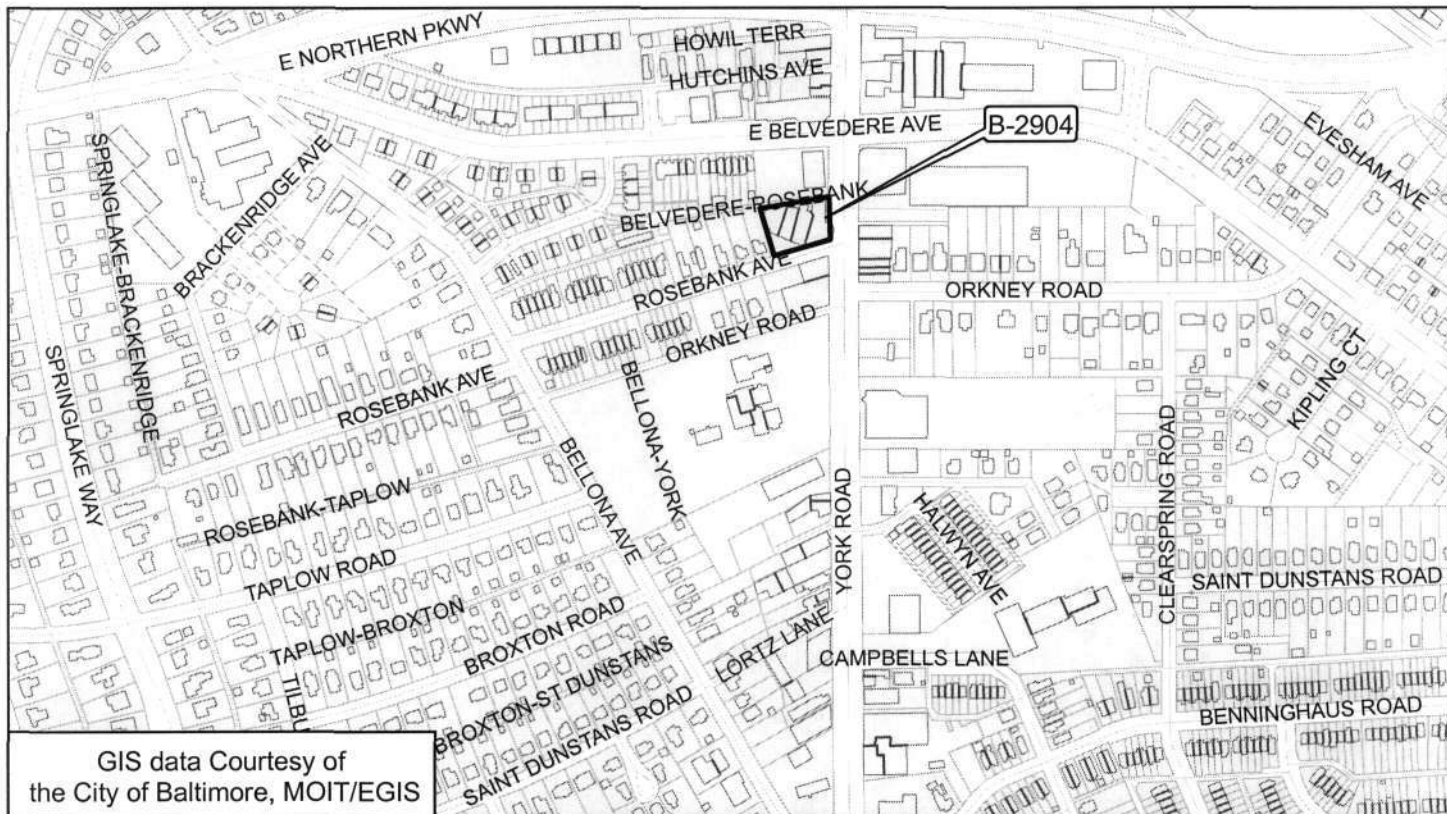
Dep. No.: Thomas A. Kiefaber

1904 York Rd.

Baltimore, Md. 21212

White panel at proscenium
stage

B-2904
Senator Theater
5904 York Road
Block 5093B Lot 025
Baltimore City
Baltimore County
Baltimore East Quad.



MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

B-2904
MAGI#0429045824

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Senator Theater

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

5904 York Road

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

☐ STRUCTURE

☐ SITE

☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS

☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

☐ UNOCCUPIED

☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

☐ ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED

☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE

☐ COMMERCIAL

☐ EDUCATIONAL

☒ ENTERTAINMENT

☐ GOVERNMENT

☐ INDUSTRIAL

☐ MILITARY

☐ MUSEUM

☐ PARK

☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

☐ RELIGIOUS

☐ SCIENTIFIC

☐ TRANSPORTATION

☐ OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Records Office Room 601

STREET & NUMBER

Baltimore City Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

STATE

Maryland 21202

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

City of Baltimore Neighborhood Survey

DATE

1977

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☒ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

STATE

Maryland 21202

DESCRIPTION

B-2904

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Senator Theater, built of limestone and American Common bond brick, is of the Art Deco style.

"The exterior of the theater is a massive unit designed along simple lines, and dominated by a circular upper structure of glass blocks and limestone. At night, fluorescent lamps behind the glass provide a multi-colored lighting effect. The walls of the auditorium were covered with dubonnet and tan damask with a maroon plaster dado trimmed in shades of tan. The stage curtains were gold with silver applique work. In the center of the ceiling is a plain oval of light ivory hard-plaster with the sides and the rear of the ceiling richly decorated in a mural design in ivory and rose on a deep blue field. The circular lobby features a terrazzo floor with lower walls of antique walnut and upper walls decorated with murals in shades of ivory on an aquamarine field". (Robert Kirk Headly, Jr., Exit, p. 122)

The theater fronts York Road, used heavily by motor vehicles and pedestrians.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

SIGNIFICANCE

B-2904

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1939

BUILDER/ARCHITECT E. Eyring and Sons/John J. Zink

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Senator Theater was built by E. Eyring and Sons for Durkee Enterprises at a cost of \$250,000. It opened Thursday, October 5, 1939 with "Stanley and Livingstone". Originally a neighborhood movie house, the Senator began showing first-run features in the early 1960's (the first neighborhood movie house in Baltimore to do so).

The Senator is among the most impressive theaters of the Art Deco style in Baltimore.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

B-2904

Headley, Robert Kirk, Jr. Exit: A History of Movies in Baltimore.
Baltimore: Robert Kirk Headley, Jr., 1974

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE

Bill Tamburrino, Planning Assistant

ORGANIZATION

Commission for Hist. & Arch. Pres.

DATE

1977

STREET & NUMBER

100 N. Holliday Street

TELEPHONE

396-4866

CITY OR TOWN

Baltimore

STATE

Maryland 21202

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438



Senator Theater
5904 York Rd.
(5093)

B-2904

4-1